

Collecting All the Strays

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Category: How to Train Your Dragon
Genre: Humor
Language: English
Characters: Astrid, Hiccup
Status: Completed
Published: 2011-10-14 01:53:17
Updated: 2011-10-14 01:53:17
Packaged: 2016-04-26 11:59:43
Rating: K+
Chapters: 1
Words: 513
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
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>AN: Written for the LJ comm 31_days, prompt "Cute", by the way, means "fascinatingly ugly" Spoilers for the end of the movie.**

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><p>There are only a few things in life that Astrid loves more than watching Hiccup work with dragons; there is a certain joy in his eyes, a captivated look on his face, and an air of concentration so intense that only a few dare bother him as he works. Astrid is one of those few, one of a single-digit number who've been granted this permission, but she would never dare because when he's like this he's as fascinating as he is fascinated â€" sometimes she wonders if this is what Hiccup feels when he watches her practice, because she puts her heart and soul into her training the same way that Hiccup puts his heart and soul into learning and figuring out how the world works.<p>

Today he's studying a clutch of Nadder eggs that have hatched the night before; it's the first spring that the dragons have actually allowed him close enough to get decent notes â€" the Nadders in particular have been stubborn, hiding their nests and evading any of Hiccup's attempts to follow. Hiccup is clearly delighted by the development. He and Fishlegs have been collaborating on updating the

Dragon Book, and Hiccup wants it to be as detailed as possible, covering the entire life cycle of all the dragon species.

Astrid isn't tagging along so much as she's been sent to retrieve him for dinner " he's skipped both breakfast and lunch at this point, and while she knows he packs food he's also been known to forget to eat it in his excitement.

"Come on, Hiccup," she calls patiently, loath to disturb him even if she knows that she has to, knows she can't let him work just because it makes her smile. "Everyone is waiting for you."

"Look Astrid!" he calls, holding up a baby Nadder. He knows she has a soft spot for them, seems to bond easier with the Nadders than the other species. "Isn't it cute?"

It isn't. Hiccup's explained how the babies are hatched bare, and don't grow in fluffy grey feathers for the first couple months, don't develop their colorful spines for years, so he's holding an irritated, flesh colored creature, its mouth open and yowling and honestly, it's kind of one of the ugliest things Astrid's ever seen.

She glances at Toothless, who blinks at her. She thinks she can see the very deliberate twitch of his eyebrows. That fascination thing only goes so far, especially when her stomach is growling. She looks back at Hiccup, who is smiling at her hopefully.

"Adorable," Astrid agrees. "Let's bring it back leftovers from dinner?"

It's almost worth the lecture on the dietary habits of infant dragons.

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><p>Originally posted 0209/2011

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